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FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
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INFO RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 9790

S E C R E T RIYADH 001532

NOFORN
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DEPT FOR NEA/ARP. NEA/EX, DS/IP/NEA, DS/ITA, DS/IP/SPC/MSG,
DS/OSAC; RIYADH PASS TO DHAHRAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/10/2018
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [AMGT](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: RIYADH EAC - 10 OCTOBER 2008

REF: A. RIYADH 01515
[1](#)B. RIYADH 01472
[1](#)C. SANAA 10547
[1](#)D. (U) IIR 1 656 6393 / DIIR 243-08-175
[1](#)E. (U) IIR 1 656 7067 09 / DIIR 243-09-001
[1](#)F. STATE 102439 (7 FAM 052)

Classified By: DCM DAVID RUNDELL FOR REASONS 1.4 (B), (C), AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) On October 10, 2008, the Ambassador convened a meeting of Riyadh's Emergency Action Committee (EAC) to discuss the Mission's security posture and the continuation of restrictions on Embassy personnel in light of recent threats involving the Embassy as reported in ref B. Also discussed were two recently obtained reports of targeting of Western compounds in Riyadh and Post's response to these threat reports. In addition to the Ambassador, present were DCM, MGT, POL/MIL, DAO, USCS, DHS, CENTOM, LEGAT, GRPO, SCCIP, EXEC, OPM/SANG, ATO, ECON, and RSO.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) RSO opened the meeting by describing two threat reports identifying Western compounds as intended targets of terrorist attacks (refs D & E). Per reftels, Saudi Security Forces discovered plans and maps when they arrested eight suspected Al-Qaida members that had been seen crossing over the Saudi border from Yemen. Based on the reports, RSO Riyadh notified specifically identified Western compounds and employees of Boeing and the Al Salam Company in Riyadh of the threat, reported ref A.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) In follow up discussion regarding this threat, the use of rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) as an element of a ground assault against compounds became a topic for the EAC. The DCM, commenting that the use of RPGs as a precursor or element of a ground assault seems to becoming a regional trend for terrorists. As examples, reports of RPG use by the terrorists during the September 17th US Embassy attack in Yemen and now this latest account of targeting the Al Salam Company and its facilities with RPGs, caused the EAC to agree that such an attack against our Embassy would be hard to counter. The DCM followed the group's conclusion by requesting the RSO to coordinate with knowledgeable DAO and US Military elements within the Embassy community to assess our compound's vulnerability to RPG attack and to report its finding back to the Committee for further consideration on the matter.

[1](#)4. (S) Also of concern regarding compound vulnerabilities and according to several independent RSO sources, within the past month Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) elements have noticeably decreased their numbers and levels of security equipment at numerous Western residential compounds throughout Riyadh. In some cases, heavily armed, armored military-style vehicles have been replaced by smaller, lightly armed civilian type vehicles. At other locations, security support vehicles have been removed all together.

Staffing of security personnel has also been reduced across the board, according to RSO sources. The RSO stated he continues to compile details of all compounds identified as having reduced their security posture to extreme levels and has, with EAC concurrence, declared these facilities "off-limits" to the Embassy's American staff, for the time being, for social and recreational activities.

¶5. (S/NF) In response to these compound security concerns, the DCM requested RSO survey residential compounds, especially those popular with the Embassy community for social and sports activities, to determine the potential risk of attending events or visiting these facilities. Along the same lines, the DCM instructed RSO to take another look at those hotels currently approved by the RSO and routinely used to house Embassy guests, making sure that an appropriate level of security remains and is maintained at these utilized hotels. GRPO suggested that our findings be brought to the attention of Saudi officials to request additional security support, should any of these hotels be found deficient in security readiness.

¶6. (S) In response, the RSO plans to update existing hotel surveys as soon as possible. Regarding compound surveys, RSO will continue to elicit information through OSAC and other available resources regarding the status of the compounds in question, until such time that surveys may be conducted and documented by RSO staff.

¶7. (S) Given the current decrease in credible threat reporting specific to the Embassy, an increased Saudi Security Force presence around our compound, and a marked improvement of our facility's physical security features due to the near completed upgrade of the Embassy's outer perimeter wall, the RSO agreed that restrictions enacted by the EAC on September 24, 2008 (ref B) be revised.

¶8. (U) This date, the EAC agreed to the following revisions, published in Security Notice 08-010:

Embassy/GSO Annex events involving outside guests are authorized, in coordination with the RSO office for scheduling and numbers.
Trips to Eskan Village, grocery shopping (including malls), and restaurants (not in hotels) are authorized, in coordination with motor pool.
All other requests will continue to be considered on a case by case basis by RSO.
Motor Pool will remain with those making visits off the DQ of 1 1/2 hours or less; If 2 or more employees (i.e. the buddy system) want to stay at a location for over 1 1/2 hours (eg: to shop or go to a restaurant), the motor pool vehicle will drop off and then pick up upon being called.

NOTE: For security reasons, staying in one place for over 2 hours is not advised, and large gatherings of Westerners at any one location must be avoided.

Until further notice, the following areas frequented by Westerners will remain off limits:
Iconic Hotels (such as Kingdom Tower and Faisalia)
Souks
Western Compounds assessed as having inadequate security by RSO

¶9. (U) The above restrictions will be revisited at the next EAC meeting.

¶10. (U) Riyadh's POC in this reporting is RSO John Taylor at 966 1 488-3800 ext. 4984 (Open) or ext. 4203 (Secure).

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